



***eNews from Sen. Lisa Murkowski - Vol. 3, Issue 2 : [Visit Senator Murkowski's Web Site](#)  
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### **Murkowski Chairs HELP Field Hearing in Anchorage**

On February 20, I convened an Anchorage field hearing of the Senate Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions (HELP) Committee. The purpose of the hearing was to investigate the shortage of primary care physicians throughout the nation, with a focus on rural communities.

We heard from doctors, Medicare clients and senior advocates, and their testimony gave greater evidence of the physician shortage crisis facing Alaskan communities. Alaskan seniors told us that they are unable to find a Medicare physician to treat them, while Physicians pointed out that Medicare only reimburses them 40 percent of their expenses to treat patients. For example one doctor testified that in order to meet his expenses in treating Medicare patients, he would need to see a patient every seven minutes.

Anchorage has the sixth lowest physician-to-patient ratio in the nation, and outside of Anchorage it is the lowest in the nation. And, unfortunately, we do not have enough doctors in the pipeline to alleviate this problem – fewer Alaskans are accepted into medical school than any other state.

The situation is unacceptable. For the short term, I am working with Senator Stevens to fix the low reimbursement rates for physicians who serve Medicare patients. Additionally, I will soon introduce the Physician Shortage Elimination Act, which, if enacted, will help Alaska's long-term health care needs. I've identified programs that have been successful in the past but have been underutilized such as the National Health Service Corp. The legislation will provide new investments in residency programs, grants and services that have been successful in meeting the health needs of rural America.



*Murkowski listens to testimony at the HELP field hearing.*

### **Murkowski Joins Bipartisan Effort to Combat Breast Cancer**

I recently joined a bipartisan effort to combat breast cancer by signing on as an original sponsor of The Breast Cancer and Environmental Research Act of 2007. The Breast Cancer and Environmental Research Act would establish a national strategy to study the links between the environment and breast cancer. This legislation would authorize the National Institutes of Health to develop a peer reviewed research program of grants for the establishment of collaborative centers of research to study environmental factors that are believed to contribute to the development of breast cancer.

With 3 million women living with breast cancer today, the disease is taking a serious toll on the entire nation. Unfortunately, the causes of breast cancer are largely unknown. While less than 30% of breast cancers are explained by known risk factors, there is little consensus in the scientific community on how the environment impacts breast cancer. This legislation will support important research that could be valuable in understanding the causes of breast cancer and lead to prevention strategies.

### **Murkowski Supports One-Year Extension to Secure Rural Schools Act**

Senator Stevens and I have cosponsored legislation by Senator Larry Craig (R-ID) that would extend the Secure Rural Schools and Community Self-Determination Act by one year. The program provides a dedicated funding stream for local municipalities and school districts dependent on forest timber receipts that have been unable to rely on consistent and sustainable payments due the continued controversy over timber sales in National Forests.

It is my hope that we can come to a long term solution that either extends the payment program or allows communities surrounded by National Forests the opportunity to have sustainable economic growth through timber development. In the meantime, this one-year extension will provide schools and communities the revenue they desperately need.



*Senator Murkowski speaks with educators in Ketchikan where the need for the Secure Rural Schools Act was emphasized.*

## **Murkowski Addresses Alaska State Legislature**

On February 22, I addressed the State Legislature. Following are excerpts from the speech. You can view the remarks in their entirety in the [speeches section of my website](#).

### *On the Effort to Eliminate Earmarks*

“We use the term “earmark” liberally but it’s important to understand what an earmark is in the definition of a Congressional appropriation. Basically, an earmark is simply a project or program that was not in the President’s budget request but that Congress deemed worthy of funding. When you eliminate earmarks, you take away the ability of Congressional members who best know their state’s priorities to weigh in on funding decisions, and allow the federal agencies to set the priorities.”

### *On Alternative Energy*

“Alaska has more than oil and gas on the North Slope to provide energy for our residents and the rest of the nation. Alaska is rich in sources of renewable energy. From the wind in the west – to our tremendous tides in southcentral – to our geothermal springs throughout the State, Alaska has potential to be a leader in alternative energy development.”

### *On Iraq*

“Any chance for success in Iraq is wholly dependent on the willingness of Iraq’s political leaders to make tough, far-reaching decisions – and follow through with action. On that, we are all in agreement. In Congress, we must be mindful of the words that we use – whether in statements, debate, or legislation. They must not imply a lack of support for our troops, nor for the families and loved ones that must make do while they are deployed. And most importantly, we must not cut off funding for our troops.”

## **Murkowski Introduces Heart for Women Act**



*Senator Murkowski speaks at a press conference to introduce the HEART for Women Act. The bill would improve the prevention, diagnosis and treatment of heart disease, stroke, and other cardiovascular diseases in women by educating both women and health care providers about the most effective options for women.*

## **Murkowski Reintroduces Legislation to Promote Nutrition in Food Sold in Schools**

I recently joined Senator Tom Harkin (D-IA), and a bipartisan group of Senate co-sponsors, in introducing the Child Nutrition Promotion and School Lunch Protection Act of 2007.

With childhood obesity rates continuing to climb at an alarming rate, this legislation is designed to update the definition of “foods of minimal nutritional value” and to ensure that all foods that are sold in schools – whether in the cafeteria or in a vending machine – will meet the new nutritional standards. In fact, a recent report in the Journal of the National Medical Association found that between 1980 and 2000, the prevalence of obesity among children and adolescents nearly tripled. Companion legislation will also be introduced in the House by Congressmen Christopher Shays (R-CT) and Lynn Woolsey (D-CA).

We all know the problem, and we all know that eating the right amount of healthy foods and getting enough exercise are the answers to preventing overweight, obesity and all the related serious health problems and costs. This legislation helps ensure that our kids are receiving a consistent,



simple message – they should be eating healthy foods – foods that they can find in their schools.



*Senator Murkowski receives an award from a national health care association recognizing her work on rural health issues.*

### **City of Anchorage Recognized for its Salmon in the City Program**

The U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service recently named Anchorage's Salmon in the City program one of the nation's best salmon and wildlife restoration programs. The Municipality received a Fisheries and Habitat Conservation Partner Award in Washington, D.C. on March 1. This program is part of a nationwide effort to ensure healthy populations of Pacific salmon and steelhead. Congress established the Pacific Coastal Salmon Recovery Fund (PCSRF) in 2000 to support state, local, and tribal salmon conservation and recovery activities.

I would like to congratulate Mayor Begich and his staff for their work in making certain that Anchorage is not only a great place to live and work, but a great place to reel in a king, silver or humpy as well. For more information [visit the City's website.](#)

### **EDA Announces Excellence in Economic Development Awards 2007**

EDA is currently accepting nominations for Excellence in Economic Development Awards in the following categories:

- Excellence in Urban or Suburban Economic Development
- Excellence in Rural Economic Development
- Excellence in Enhancing Regional Competitiveness
- Excellence in Economic Adjustment Strategies
- Excellence in Technology-led Economic Development
- Excellence in Community and Faith-Based Social Entrepreneurship
- Excellence in Innovation

Competition for the Awards is open to nonprofit organizations, local, state and regional government entities, universities and colleges. The deadline for nominations is April 12, 2007. For more information, and to download a brochure, visit [EDA's website.](#)



*Senator Murkowski was on hand for the Ceremonial Start of the Iditarod. She is pictured here with veteran musher John Baker of Kotzebue and Iditarider Nia Campbell a student at Ursa Minor Elementary School whose father is currently deployed in Iraq.*



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